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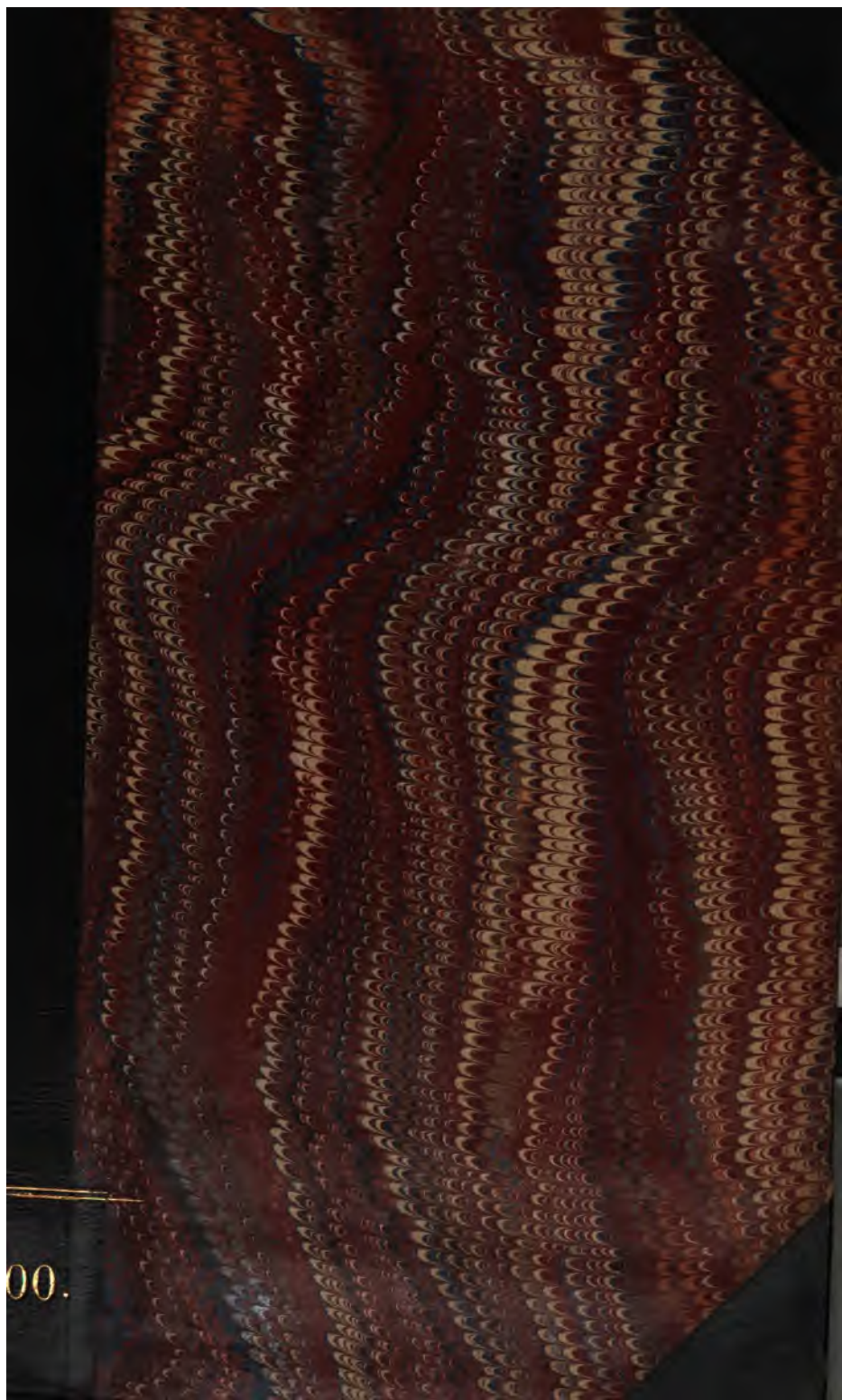
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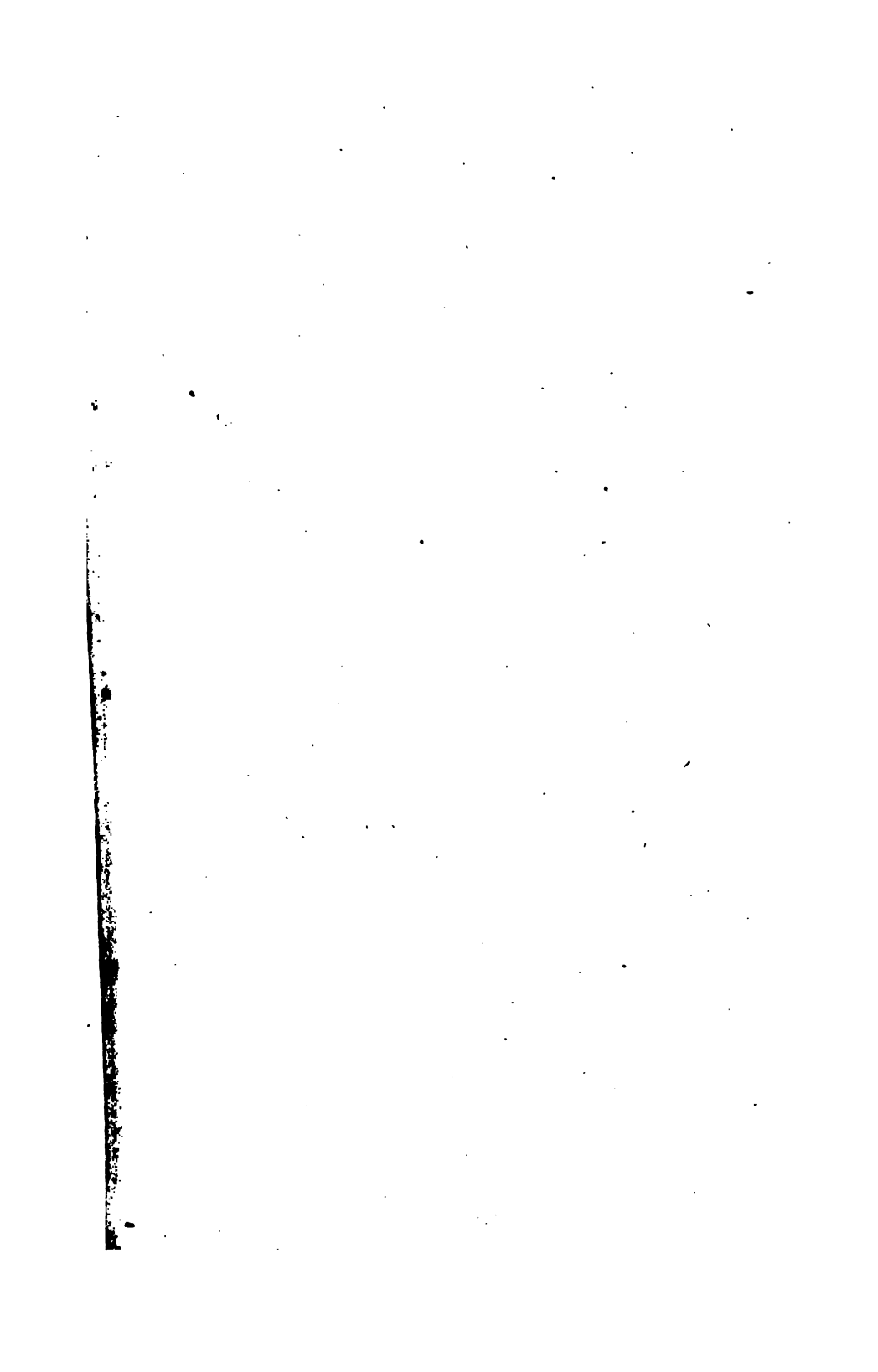
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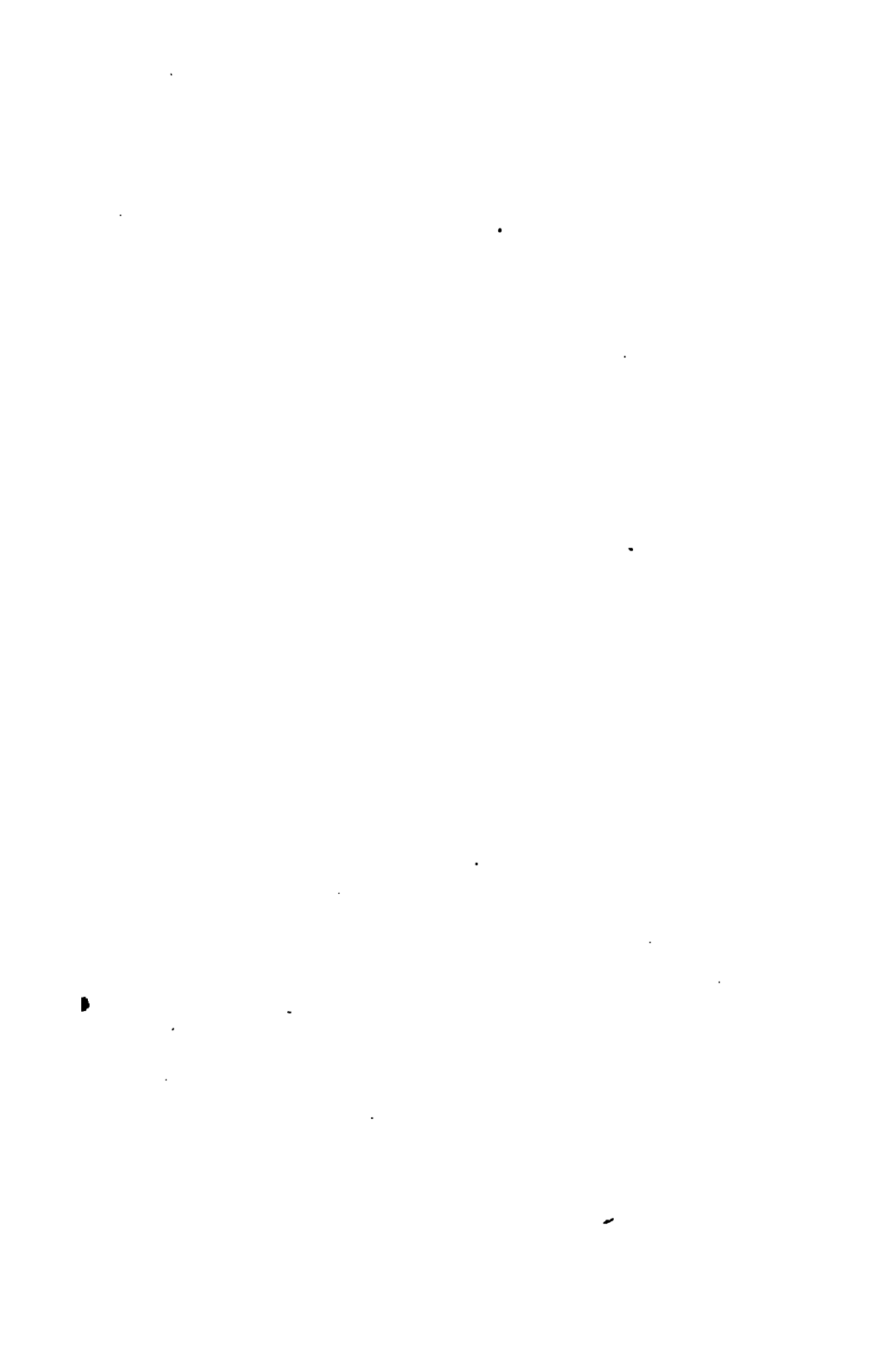
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S. O M E
Friendly Remarks

O N
A S E R M O N

Lately Preach'd at *Braintree*, 3d. *Parish*,
and now Published to the World by
the Rev^d. Mr. *Porter* of *Bridgwater* ;
from those Words in ISAIAH, 64. 6.
--- *All our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.*

In a LETTER to the *Author*,
To be
Communicated to his *Attestators*.

By *Lemuel Briant*, A. M.

And Pastor of the first Church in *Braintree*.

--- *Turning the Grace of GOD into Lasciviousness.*---St. JUDE.
--- *Of this Sort are they which creep into Houses, and lead captive
silly Women laden with Sins, led away with divers Lusts.*
Whose Mouths must be stopped.---St. PAUL.

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A

LETTER, &c.



Rev. Sir,



OUR Sermon on *Isaiah* 64. 6. preached at the 3^d. Parish in *Brain-tree* the 25th. of last *December*, and since publish'd to the World under the Patronage of *five worthy Divines*, has put me upon writing the following Letter, which I venture abroad without taking the Trouble to ride after *Attestators*; being fully perswaded of the Truth of what a venerable Father in these Churches observed to you, when solicited to usher your Performance into the World with a recommendatory Preface, *That it will carry it's own Force with it.* And I trust you will not think it impertinent in me to undertake the Office of a Remarker on your *Elaborate, Orthodox,*

6 A LETTER, &c.

ibodox, well attested Preachment, since 'tis so expressly levelled against a late printed Discourse of mine on the same Text, and delivered as near my Parish as perhaps you could readily find a Pulpit open for you.

WHAT your design was in favouring *Brain-tree* with this Specimen of *the good old Calvinistical Way of Preaching*, (tho', as I shall shew in the Sequel, not altogether so *Calvinistical* as perhaps you imagined) your design in it, I say, I pretend not to determine, having not as yet arrived to the Gift of Discerning Spirits. I charitably hope it was well meant, to confirm that good People to whom it was preach'd, in *Soul humbling and Christ exalting Doctrines*. But since you yourself acknowledge there is a *great deal* of Wickedness cleaving to the *best* performances of the *very best* Men on Earth, you will forgive me if I should say 'tis not impossible that there might be some *little* Design in the Time of it springing from the old and not from the new Man in you; to make an impression on my People to the disadvantage of their unworthy Pastor. And if there was, (which I am so far from determining, that I only suppose it possible) it will be but a friendly Office in me to inform you what success your Labours have met with.

AND truly, (Mr. Porter,) I rejoice that I can tell you.—Neither the *Force of your reasoning*, nor the *Fervency of your Brother Eaton's Prayers*; nor yet (I would further add if I tho't my Boldness could hope for Pardon;) *the Character and Influence*

Influence which your Attestators have *this Way* : Neither of these, I say, has as yet procured my Dismissal. But notwithstanding all you have said, (or I believe can say,) notwithstanding the assiduous Endeavours of several *warm* Gentlemen to sow *Discord among Brethren*, which the Scripture says is an *Abomination to the Lord* : We have as yet a pretty considerable Degree of what *we* call *Christian Love and Union* amongst us. You and some others perhaps will give it no better a Name than that of *curst Peace* ; which dreadful Curse these Churches have of late years bid fair to be delivered from.

I acknowledge I should not have the greatest Opinion of the Union that at present subsists amongst us, and which this little Flock committed to my Care (to their eternal Honour be it spoken) have been so remarkable for all along these divided distracted Times, had we any better Reason than the rash Censures of others, to conclude it was founded only in Ignorance and Carnal Security.

BUT if we are as ignorant, blind and stupid a People as some are pleased to represent us, (who perhaps would be full as well employed in mending themselves as in speaking Evil of their Neighbours) yet I desire to bless God, we have this hopeful symptom still left upon us, that we are desirous to know the Truth. And not only so; but 'tis the Disposition of my Charge to seek for ~~in~~ in the holy Scriptures without any slavish attachment to humane Schemes.

INDEED

INDEED it must be acknowledged with all Gratitude, that there has of late Years been a remarkable *Out-pouring* of the good old *Berean* Spirit; and the Perils, that in Times of Ignorance and implicit believing have attended Freedom and Plainness of Speech (which is an essential Branch of that Holiness that becomes God's House forever) are very considerably abated.

FIRMLY believing this, and that no Truth can ever suffer by Examination, I venture (*Dear Sir*) to Oppose *so mighty, so well attested* an Author. And what I have to say to yourself I shall digest into the following order.

1st. I will show how far in fact you Oppose me in your Sermon, whatever you aimed to do in the Time of preaching and publishing it.

2^{ly}. I will particularly consider the several Arguments you use to Support this your Opposition, and point out to you the weakness and insufficiency of them to this Purpose.

3^{ly}. I will show that so far as you have any Controversy with me, you equally oppose *Calvin* himself. Upon the Truth of which, you will allow me the Liberty to expostulate a little with yourself, and Rev. Attestators, as to the Cry you have raised from the supposed Abuse of this Text, about the Growth of Arminianism.

1st. I am to show how far in Fact you oppose me in your Sermon, &c.---And here, One would be

be apt to think by your running Title, and by the doleful (tho' I hope groundless) Cry you make about Religion's dying with the Fathers for want of proper Persons to supply their Places, as well as innumerable other broad Hints in your Sermon, that it was the *Bible* itself that was struck at by some unsound and unserious; by some bold, graceless young Heretick. But upon comparing Notes, I believe it will be found that you have in fact no Controversy with me, only as to the Sense and Design of One single Passage in this Book : And that is those Words, in *Isaiah* 64. 6.---*All our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.*---I endeavour to shew that the Prophet is not speaking of the Virtues of *real* good Men, and branding *true* Righteousness with the odious Character of *filthy Rags*; but only describing and lamenting the general want of it. Mr. *Porter* says nay; This is not the Sense and Design of the Prophet in the Passage under Consideration, but that the Text is rack'd, and a Sense extorted from it that it was never willing to speak; that it intends not the *Hypocritical Performances* of wicked Men, but the *best* Virtues of the *best* Men, of which *filthy Rags* is a very fit Resemblance.

THIS I take to be the true state of the Point in Dispute. And consequently all your after-Discourse, every Thing you have advanced relating to some other controverted Points in Divinity which you take occasion to speak of in the prosecution of this Subject, I have at present nothing to do with, nor could you from any Thing delivered in my Sermon with the least Colour of reason pretend to

level your spiritual Artillery against me. If you aimed at me, in that Fire of Zeal about substituting our *personal*, in the Room of Christ's *surety, Righteousness*, you have certainly miss'd your Mark, and must charge again if you design to do Execution. If you tho't I had taught that we are perfectly Righteous; that we are as Righteous as the Angels in Heaven; or what is worse still, that our Righteousness deserves to be compared with the Infinite Purity of the divine Nature, or finally that we can merit Heaven by it; If these were your Tho'ts, I say, you have mistaken the Man, and are fighting only with your own Shadow.

I challenge you, or any one, or all of your Attestators, to point out a single Passage in my Sermon where the Doctrine of Justification by the *merit* of Man's *personal* Righteousness is asserted, or from whence it can by good and necessary Consequence be inferred. All I contend for, the whole Point I have in View throughout my whole Discourse (I say again) is only to show that the Prophet did not design to brand the Vertues of *real* good Men with this odious Character of *filthy Rags*, but is speaking in the Text, of the Performances of quite a different set of People. So far am I from teaching any thing about the *merit* of them, that I say expressly, (Page 29th.) *Forgiveness of Sin and final Acceptance with the Father is thro' the Merits of the Son.* And is there any thing contradictory and inconsistent in all this? Can there be no Degree of Purity in Men, and this Purity held not to be filthiness, without supposing *personal* Righteousness

A LETTER, &c. YI

to be the *Meritorious* Cause of our Justification. I confess I never yet saw (before Mr. Porter and Company shewed us) the Absurdity and Blasphemy, the Popery and Arminianism of believing *Purity to be Purity, and good Works to be good Works.* But I always tho't that so far as any Man is pure, (let it be in a greater or lesser Degree) he is not filthy. Nor can I see what end it will answer in carrying on a *glorious Work* of Reformation in the Land to make personal Goodness of no Account, and to load it with the most Opprobrious Language, because we an't so perfect in the Practice of it, as some other superiour Beings in the Universe. God don't despise the Day of small things, but represents himself as rejoycing in the Beginning and most imperfect Degrees of true Goodness in his Creatures. Why then should *Christ's Ambassadors* set at nought this Ornament of great Price in God's sight ? If there is a mixture of Wickedness (as undoubtedly there is) in the best Men on Earth, that ought to be called Wickedness, and put far away from us ; but so far as they are pure and holy, for my part I see no Reason why they should not be called so, and from the excellency of the thing, be encouraged to cultivate this Divine Temper in their Souls. *Woe unto him that calls evil good, and good evil.*

BUT all this will not do, you still insist upon it, that those Divine Vertues which constitute the Image of God, are in his sight no better than *filthy Rags*, and that it was the Design of the Prophet in particular, in the Passage under Consideration to represent them as such. But as saying and proving

ving differ as much as saying and doing, I will presume as was proposed, (2ly.) To Examine the several Arguments you use to support your opposite Sense of the Text, and point out to you the weakness and insufficiency of them to this Purpose.

You say you could easily make out what you advance relating to the Sense and Design of the Prophet in the Text, by Arguments drawn from the Context and other Parts of *Isaiab's* Prophecy. Strange to me! when 'twas so easy, you had not tryed what you could do this way ; especially when you yourself say (*Pag. 3.*) " Some in the Explication of this professed Rule (*meaning the Bible*) dont duly consider the Text and Context, the Scope and Design of the inspired Penman, to find the genuine meaning of the Passage under Consideration, &c. " Pray Sir, how can you tell who the Prophet is here speaking of, and what Character he is drawing, unless you consider the whole run of his Discourse. You won't, I trust, pretend that by your *inward* Illumination you can certainly tell the meaning of an Author in any broken Sentence picked out of his Writings, without taking into Consideration other parts of his Discourse, upon which the right understanding of it essentially depends. Truly, Mr. Porter, your passing over the Context and other parts of this Book so slightly, when you were professedly settling the Sense of a few dependant Words in it, and when this was the only possible way to cast a true Light upon your Subject, is not with me the most indubitable Evidence that you tho't the

Consideration

Consideration of these Things would serve your present turn.

BUT you say there is no need of this, since " the Text it self without going any further, furnishes you with Arguments sufficient for your purpose. " It may be so. But you wont take it amiss if I presume to examine your Arguments a little before I believe it. Your

1st *Argument* is taken from the Word *Righteousnesses*. And what you say here may be thrown into this Form. If the Word *Righteousness* or *Righteousnesses* is never in Scripture used for the *Hypocritical Performances* of wicked Men, but to denote something truly good and excellent ; then we may infer that the latter and not the former is intended in the Text ---- I acknowledge there would be something of an Argument here, if your *Hypothesis* could be maintained. But that it cannot is no hard Task to prove. The Case in short is so plain that I have been astonished (as well as many others) that your *Supervisor*, or some of your *Reverend Attestators* had not counselled you better, (as young Men I know need Advice) than to let such an Argument as this appear in Publick. What ! is there no Place, from the Beginning of *Genesis* to the End of *Revelation* where the Term *Righteousness* is applied to the *Hypocritical Performances* of wicked Men ? Strange you should not know better than this ! Don't we read in this Book of Men that *trust to their own Righteousness* ; that *go about to establish a Righteousness of their own* ; that *turn away from their Righteousness* ;

come to fix such an unlimited Sense on the Term *all* in this Text, when you yourself will acknowledge, that in many other Places of holy Scripture 'tis so far from intending *Universality*, that it does not comprehend even the *Majority*, only a few particular Persons. Thus when we read of Christ's dying, of his giving his Life a Ransom for *all*, of his tasting of Death for *every* Man, (which Language is at least as universal as this in our Text) you know very well that *all* and *every* Man does not intend (according to the Letter) *all* and *every* Man : But must be construed *agreeable to the Analogy of Faith*, as meaning only *a few*.

I know it will not follow from hence that it is to be taken so in this Place, in particular. But from the abovementioned Examples it appears, to *you* I hope at least, that it *may be* upon Occasion thus Restrained. And there is this further Consideration that will perhaps render it not only *possible*, but also pretty probable, that it was not (strictly speaking) a universal, but only a general Character the Prophet is here drawing ; that this is perfectly agreeable to the prophetick Stile, and many Instances of the same Nature may easily be produced from the Writings of these *holy Men* of old. Thus *Moses* describing the Wickedness of the old World, says in *Gen. 6. 12.* *ALL Flesh had corrupted his Way on Earth.* But this Account cannot strictly speaking comprehend *all* the Men that were then on the Earth, for there is at the same Time an express Exemption of *Noah*, who is said to be a *Just Man, perfect in his Generation,*

ration, and one that walked with God. And therefore we read of his finding Grace in the Eyes of the Lord, and being with his House saved from the fatal Deluge. And so again; In the Prophet *Jeremiah's* Day on Earth, the Almighty challenges them to find so much as a *Man* that was truly good in *Jerusalem*. And yet we can't suppose they were *all* to a Man, Vicious and Ungodly; but that they were generally so, and considered in a National View verily Guilty before God. But not to enlarge in so plain a Case; much to the same Purpose are those Words in the 14th Psalm 3d Ver. *They are ALL gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is NONE that doeth good, no not ONE.* Whatever Time of prevailing Corruption the sacred Writer here alludes to, no doubt there was then a Remnant according to the Election of Grace, that truly feared God. All therefore that can be intended in the Passage is, that Vice was Rampant and nearly Epidemical. And why might we not (if Mr. Porter had not forbid it) thus have understood the Prophet in our Text? And what if we should after all, thus understand him, since there are so many particular Places in Scripture to countenance the Construction.

ONE thing further I will mention while I think of it; and that is, if it was every individual in the Jewish Church to whom the Prophet applies the Character in the Text, his Confession I humbly apprehend would not be very consistent in Mr. Porter's Sense of it. You suppose he is confessing the insufficiency of Man's best personal Righteousness

teousness to Justification. This I grant would sound very well ; it would be a great Expression of Humility and Self-Abasement as to the Godly Part of them, to acknowledge that after all their Virtuous Attainments, they could not stand Trial by the Law of perfect Obedience, but must have Recourse to the *free unbo't Grace of God* for Pardon and Acceptance. But pray, what propriety could there be in acknowledging that the Righteousness of the rest (which was by far the major Part) could not Justify them ? It would be only to say, that those Things could not procure Justification, which deserve the highest Damnation. Certain it is our Understanding the Prophet in this unlimited Sense necessarily runs us into a strange Mixture and Confusion of Characters, putting the most Vicious upon a Parr with the most Holy in Point of Acceptance with their Maker ; whereas (Mr. Porter) I trust will allow that the latter (the Merit of their Goodness being entirely excluded) have better Grounds to hope in God than the former, from the merciful Tenour of the Gospel. Tho' I know of *some warm Folks* that have preached it up as a *fundamental Doctrine* of Grace, that the most vicious Livers stand fairest for the *special* Grace of God. And when they design to give a Man the worst of Characters, to represent his Case as very Bad and Dangerous, they will call him a *moral Man*. This in their Esteem places him ten Degrees below a Heathen. But *shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound* ? The Apostle rejects this *Antinomian* notion with a most vehement *GOD FORBID*. But 'tis high Time that we proceed to say something to your

3d. And

3d. *And last* Argument; which is taken from the Term *our* in the Text. And which as you humbly apprehend, and as your *Attestators* have settled the Point, must include the Prophet himself in the Character here drawn; And consequently the *personal* Righteousness of *One real good Man* at least is stiled *filthy Rags*. One Instance I acknowledge, especially of so good a Man as we all believe the Prophet *Isaiab* was, would be quite sufficient in this Case: And the Point must be given up without any more ado, if it did appear that he here styles *his own* personal Righteousness *filthy Rags*. The Charge moreover of *abuse* in changing *our* into *their* would be very just. But pray *Gentlemen*, isn't it as rational (if you will allow Reason to have any Hand in settling the sense of Scripture) to suppose the Prophet is here Speaking in a publick Capacity; and that he was (as we commonly phrase it) the Peoples Mouth to God in this humble Confession?

It will be granted I believe that there is such a Thing as *National Guilt*, and that when a Person is speaking in this Latitude, and as a publick Representative of the rest in any humble Confession to Almighty God, then I say, he can't word himself better than to say, *Our Sin*, and *Our Guilt* is so and so. And if a very righteous holy Minister should thus confess the Sins of this Land, or of *old England* at this Day, could any one rationally infer, that he designed to include himself, and was speaking of his own personal Guilt of every crying Abomination among them? *I trow not*. Indeed what is more common among some of

the most Pious and Zealous of *Christ's Ambassadors*, when they are publicly confessing the Sins of this Land, to express themselves to this Purpose, *O Lord, we acknowledge our greivous Apostacy from the Principles as well as Practices of our pious Forefathers, who for the Purity of Gospel Truth ventured their Lives into this then howling WilderNESS*----- Now when such Gentlemen say our Apostacy from their Principles, &c. they would not I trust be understood to include themselves as being *personally* guilty of departing from the Faith, which was then *Imported*. For this is the very Thing, even their Zeal for the Faith of the Fathers, that is the ground of their bitter Cry about the present decay of it. And no doubt the Prophet made this Confession in our Text, because he was grieved for Transgressors. In the foregoing Words he says, *We are all as an unclean Thing*, (or as some modestly express it, *Sicut Pannus Mulieris Menstruatae*) But is this the common Character of good Men in Scripture ? Of many others vastly less holy than the Prophet 'tis said, *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified*. The Prophet must (unless you would confound all Characters) here personate the Jewish Church and People, and speak in their Names----Take an Instance or two parallel with this in our Text. In the preceeding Chapter 17th Verse, he makes this Confession,---- *Ibcu hast hardned our* (mark OUR) *Heart from thy Fear*----The Question then is, if the Term *Our* in this Place includes the Prophet himself in common with the rest of that wicked People ? If you say *Yes* ; I say you fix the worst of Characters that is any were given

given of the most abandoned Men on Earth, on one of the best of Men then alive. If you say, *Nay*; then I beg to know what Reasons you can give why the Term *Our* should not be equally extensive in both these Passages.

Again, .

IN the 59th Chap. 12th Verse, the Prophet introduces the abandoned Character of this People, with that general Confession,--- *OUR Transgressions are multiplied*-----What these were he presently enumerates, such as *Lying, Oppression, Revolt, uttering from the Heart Words of Falshood, &c.* These the Prophet stiles *our Transgressions*; but surely you and all the World, must have a much better Opinion of this Heavenly good Man than to think he was such a Lying, Dishonest Fellow as he must be, if he is here included in the Term *Our*. Nor will it sound very well, to say, *his Heart was hardened from the fear of God in point of justification.* But it must, I think, be quite plain to impartial Inquirers, that he calls these Villanies *Our Transgressions* in a *National* and not in a *Personal* Sense; and thus Confesseth them to God, as the Head and Representative of the People. For 'tis worthy of our Observation, that in a few Words after he speaks of some, whose Names were not to be put into this black Catalogue of Vices; (which yet he calls *Our Transgressions*) of some *who departed from Evil*, and thereby *made themselves a Prey*, i. e. become exposed to the Aspersions and Clamours of the aforementioned Sinners.

It would be quite endless as well as needless to produce every Instance in the Sacred Writings, where the Person speaking uses the Term *Our* in drawing of Characters, that 'tis impossible thou'd be applicable to himself without confounding all Distinctions between Good and Evil, between the Saint and the Sinner. I will therefore only add, that for the same Reason the Prophet is here supposed to include himself in the Terms *all* and *our*, he must likewise be supposed to include himself in the following Character ---- *There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.* The Text says *NONE*. But was not that Prophet a Man of Prayer? We must therefore understand the Term *None*, under the same Restriction in which we find it necessary to understand a thousand like forms of Speech, if we would make any Sense of Scripture.

THE *Apology* that is made for the Prophet, who was a very *consistent* Man, by a *late Verbose, Dark, Jesuitical Writer*, (whose *Patience* always holds out much longer than *that* of his *Readers*) will not be accepted any better than his *Former*, for a Person of a very different Character. For allowing (as we all must) that the Righteous are liable to " a sad Decay of Faith and Prayer," What is this to the present purpose? Was the Prophet *Isaiab* at this Time under any such Decays? *I trow not.* He appears all along to be in the full exercise of both; confessing their National Guilt; earnestly interceding for this poor abandoned People, and Resolving that *for Zion's sake he would not hold his Peace, and for Jerusalem's*

lems Jake take no rest, 'till the Righteousness thereof went forth as Brightness, &c.— What more pathetic Prayer could the best Saint on Earth make, (and that in the highest Exercise of GRACE) than that in the 1st Verse of this 64th Chap. *Oh that thou wouldest rent the Heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the Mountains might flow down at thy presence, &c.* If I mistake not, there is here something like the *actings of Grace* in the Duty of Prayer, and something of *a stirring up* (in this holy Man) *to take hold of God.*

AFTER all, tho' we should grant that the Prophet includes himself in all these *Characters*; we have this Refuge still in Reserve; that what he says is to be confined to the *Place* where he Delivered it; and the Doctrines of *Palestine* are no more to be receiv'd by us *here*, (tho' Delivered by the Inspiration of God) than Oaths taken in *Old England*, are to be kept in *America*. -----

BUT to return; (Mr. Porter) I have given your several Arguments a Distinct and Impartial Consideration. And if there is any Thing of Weight in what has been observed, let it have its Effect; If not, let it receive its just Contempt.

I have only to add,

3dly. THAT so far as you have any Controversy with me, you equally Oppose Calvin himself. And upon the Truth of this you will allow me the Liberty to expostulate a little with yourself, and Reverend Attestators, as to the Cry you have raised from the Abuse of the Text, about the Growth of *Arminianism* amongst us.

It

It will take up too much Room to recite all that CALVIN says in his *Commentary* on this Text. I will therefore only turn you to one or two short Sentences full to the present Point--- To prevent all Disquietudes in pious Minds from this seeming Disparagement of true Righteousness, he says, *Hic se nonnulli torquent quod Prophetæ de scelerum inquinamentis loquens sine exceptione Judæos omnes exprimat, in quibus tamen restabant puri Dei cultores; sed frustra. Quia non loquitur de singulis, sed de universo corpore, -----* In English thus--- *Here, there be some that Torment themselves because the Prophet speaking of the defilement of Sin takes in and represents the Case of all the Jews without exception, amongst whom there nevertheless remained some pure Worshipers of God; but in vain and without cause (i. e. they are disquieted in vain upon the Account of the Prophet's expressing himself so universally) because he does not here Speak of every Individual, but of the whole Body, or considered as a Society and Community of Men.----* Presently after he opens more fully still; Says he----- *Hic Locus citari a quibusdam solet ut probent adeo nihil esse meriti in Operibus nostris, ut coram Deo putidæ & fætidæ sint. Sed hoc mihi videtur alienum a Prophetæ sententia, &c. &c.* As if he had said; *This Place (meaning the 64th. Isaiah 6th.) is wont to be cited by some, that they may prove there is so far from being any thing good and valuable in our Works, that they are in God's Sight noisome and filthy Things. But this appears to me to be very foreign from the Sense of the Prophet, &c.----* Thus speaketh Mr. Calvin; And if these (Mr. Porter,) were Calvin's Sentiments

ments with Respect to the Text under Consideration, might not both you and your *Attestators* very lawfully have spared your Cries and Groanes about the Abuse of it. Nay, *Sir*, how could you with any face upon *Calvinistick* Principles disclaim *Calvin's* own Interpretation of the Words? If I have done him Justice in these Quotations, I have certainly in settling the Sense of the Text (which is all the present Controversy) been quite *Calvinistical*; unless you will suppose that *Calvin* himself was not a *Calvinist*. Surely you had much more Reason to have Charged me with Stealing my Interpretation from *Calvin* than in the least contradicting of him. How shall we account for this enormous Blunder in you? I have had various Conjectures in my own Mind about the Matter. Sometimes I have Charitably hoped that you were not acquainted with *Calvin's* Writings; that you had never Consulted him upon the Text, but took for grant that he understood all Scripture just in the same Sense in which his professed Followers now do. And then again (to be honest with you) I confess I have not sometimes been without my Doubts whether or no the Language in which *Calvin* wrote might not a little startle you. There being some in all Ages, like those in Dr. *South's*, whom he says, always looked upon *Latin* to be *the Language of the Beast*.

SIR, what your Sentiments are in this Respect or the Grounds of your thus turning an *Opposer* of *Calvin*, I pretend not to determine. Your Excuse perhaps may be, *I wot not what I did*. If so, I shall Rejoice for your Sake. But however, whether,

ther, Ignorance or Design was at the Bottom of it (I hope the former,) certain it is that 'tis matter of Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation, *that the good old Calvinistical way of opening Texts* is so little Regarded by his professed Disciples. *Alas ! Alas !* that one of his youngest Children should rise up at ~~this~~ Day against him, and find so many elder Brethren to Countenance, Attest, and Support this his Disobedience and Rebellion against him ; that the Cause of *good old Mr. Calvin* should be so wounded in the House of so many of his best Friends.

AFTER all that I have here very openly (and I trust very honestly) observed relating to *Calvinism*, I beg both *you* and your *Attestators* to spare me a Word relating to the Cry you have raised about the Growth of *Arminianism* amongst us. How far this is true, you are (or ought to be) the best Judges, who have publickly Asserted it. But to fix this Character on any Man, only from his Interpretation of one single Text ; and which at the same Time he proves to be *Calvinistical*, is I think, as Injurious to him as 'tis inconsistent with yourselves. *Gentlemen*, you know very well that *many Sounds* operate like a Charm on many Minds. " They confound their Judgment, they inflame their Passions." And this can't by any sober Men be judged the best Method to make them either sound Believers or good Livers. What Wonders have the Terms, *Infidel*, *Papist*, *Arminian*, &c. wro't on Vulgar Minds, when artfully played against an Antagonist ? How often has Truth been suppressed and Nonsense established only by the Magick

Magick of Sounds ? It never did nor never will answer any good End in the propagation of Truth, to load our *Opposers* with Terms of Reproach, and to endeavour by calling them *hard Names* to lessen their Reputation and Usefulness, under a blind Notion of their being *Hereticks*. Errors when Apparent ought undoubtedly to be Opposed by all that are set for the defence of the Gospel ; But then how is this to be managed ? Surely not by fixing the Populace with blind Prejudices against them ; but by endeavouring a solid confutation of these *Hereses* by bringing Rational and Scriptural Arguments against them. But if instead of this, Men think to carry their Cause merely by the Application of a few odious Appellations ; if instead of bringing forth their strong Reasonings, they fall to Railing and Scolding, and calling Names. It is in my Opinion but a more sly & covert Way of reviling and abusing an Opponent. And tho' it be done with ever such flaming Zeal for the purity of the Faith, and with the highest pretences of Authority from Heaven, yet the sober and rational Part of Mankind will ever look upon it as nothing but Phrenzy, and a Blasphemous Prostitution of the Name of God, to countenance our unsanctified Spleen against others, and give a currency to our own senseless Divinity among the thoughtless Multitude.

As we are all agreed in the divine Right of private Judgment, so ought we to exercise all possible Caution least we enslave our own Minds or the Minds of our People to any humane Schemes and Authorities ; for to teach them to substitute the Writings of weak fallible Men, in the Room

of Christ and his Gospel, may perhaps in the End turn out as fatal as substituting our *personal in the Room of Christ's surety Righteousness*.

But 'tis Time to have done; having already vastly exceeded the length I at first proposed in this Letter---Mr. *Porter*, I have stated (as well as I could) the Point in Controversy. I have particularly considered your Arguments and endeavoured to Point out the weakness of them. I have entered and prosecuted my Complaint against *you* and your *Attestators*, for raising a Cry about the Growth of *Arminianism*, when I have proved my self entirely *Calvinistical* in my *Sense* of this Text; which as I observed before, is the whole of the present Controversy. As for your after-Discourse about the Merit of our Goodness or Righteousness, I say again, what I intimated before, that I never tho't, believed or preached any Thing of this, but always the direct contrary Doctrine. And if you bring the Charge I shall expect you Support it with good Arguments; if not with good *Attestators*.

WHATEVER your Apprehensions or the Sentiments of others may be relating to the Doctrine of Merit, Justification, &c. I assure you, I always preach up (what I firmly believe) that the Grace of God is the Original Spring of all his Creatures Happiness, and that there is no such Thing as Buying, Purchasing or Meriting this Grace at his Hands. But that *'tis Free and Rich Grace*. By *Free* I mean, 'tis the Essential Disposition of the Deity to be good. By *Rich* I mean, the same
with

with the Sacred Writer ; that he is good to *All*, and that his tender Mercies are over *All* his Works. I tell my People indeed, that they must do all those things that are commanded in the Gospel ; which is the Law of Life to us. But am careful at the same time to add----that when they have done all they are to look for Eternal Life as the GIFT of GOD, thro' *Jesus Christ*.

SUFFER me now to Conclude all with a few short Extracts from the Writings of a *precious Minister of Jesus Christ, now with the Lord*.

“ Some Men (*says he*) seem to be so afraid of
 “ the *Merit* of Obedience and good Works, that
 “ they loath to Assert the Necessity of them, and
 “ do it with so much Caution as if they were not
 “ tho'roly perswaded of it, or did apprehend some
 “ dangerous Consequence from it. But this Fear
 “ is perfectly groundless ; as if *Merit* could not
 “ be excluded, without casting off our Duty, and
 “ reclaiming our selves from any necessary Obligations to be good.----

In another Place he says ;

“ I have been more careful to express these
 “ Things (i. e. such as Relate to Grace, Faith
 “ and personal Obedience) more fully and distinctly,
 “ that no Man may imagine, that whilst
 “ we assert the necessity of Obedience and a holy
 “ Life we have any design in the least to derogate
 “ from the Faith and Grace of God, but
 “ only to engage and encourage Men to Holiness
 “ and a good Life, by convincing them of the
 “ absolute indispensable Necessity of it, in order to
 “ Eternal Salvation. For all that I have said is
 “ in

“ in plain *English* no more than this, that its necessary for a Man to be a good Man that he may get to Heaven. And whoever finds fault with this Doctrine, finds fault with the Gospel it self, and the main End and Design of the Grace of God therein revealed to Mankind, which offers Salvation upon no other Terms--- And to preach and press this Doctrine is certainly, if any thing in the World can be so, to pursue the great End and Design of the Christian Religion ”---

In another Place he says ;

“ I know it hath been the great End and Design of the Devil and his Instruments in all Ages to undermine Religion, by making an unhappy Separation and Divorce between Godliness and Morality, between Faith, and the Virtues of a good Life, and by this means not only to weaken and abase, but even wholly to destroy the Force and Efficacy of the Christian Religion, and to leave Men as much under the Power of the Devil and their Lust, as if there was no such thing as Christianity in the World. But let us not deceive ourselves ; this always was Religion, and the Condition of our Acceptance with God, to endeavour to be like God in Purity and Holiness, in Justice and Righteousness, in Mercy and Goodness, *to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well*---

In another Place he says ;

“ There are many Persons in the World very Sollicitous about an Orthodox Belief, and mightily concerned to know what the Scriptures, but especially what the Councils and Fathers have
“ declared

“ declared in such a Matter ; and they are nice
“ and scrupulous in these Things even to the ut-
“ most Punctilio’s, and will with a most unchris-
“ tian Passion contend for the Christian Faith”—

But as he observes in another Place still ;

“ When all is done and said, there is no such
“ Error and Heresy, nothing so fundamentally
“ Opposite to Religion as a Wicked Life. ”

Thus he.

Dear Sir, I presume not to Subscribe my self
(according to *Old Style*) your Brother in the Faith
and Fellowship of the Gospel ; for fear you should
imagine I have not Faith eno’ for any Fellowship.
But you will allow me, I trust, the Privilege
of a *Heathen*, (*if found and serious*) to declare,
that,

I am

Your fellow Creature,

And Hearty Well-Wisher,

Braintree, May 22.
1750.

Lemuel Briant.

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses.







